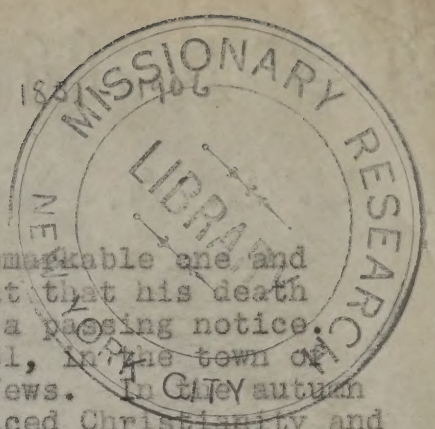


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In Memoriam:- Bishop Schereschewsky

By The Right Rev. F.R. Graves, D.D.



The life of Bishop Schereschewsky was such a remarkable one and the work which he accomplished for China was so great that his death in Tokio on the 15th of September demands more than a passing notice. Samuel Isaac Joseph Schereschewsky was born May, 1831, in the town of Tauroggen, in Russian Lithuania; his parents being Jews. In the autumn of 1854 he came to the United States, where he embraced Christianity and became a student at the General Theological Seminary, New York. He was ordained July, 1859, by the elder Bishop Boone, and immediately after went with him to China, where he was ordained priest on Sts. Simon and Jude's Day, 1860, in the Church of Our Saviour, Shanghai. He remained in Shanghai for two years, studying both the Shanghai colloquial and the Mandarin, together with classical Chinese, and then moved to Peking and resided there for thirteen years, from 1862 to 1875. He was engaged in mission work, but his chief occupation, as throughout his long life, was the translation of the Bible. He translated the entire Old Testament into Mandarin, working alone at the task, while the New Testament was being translated by a committee. This translation has been the one in common use in China since it was completed, and in its revised form holds its place today. . . . In 1865, in conjunction with Dr. Burdon, afterwards Bishop of Victoria, he translated the Prayer Book into Mandarin.

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In 1868 he was married at Shanghai to Miss Susan M. Waring and in 1875 returned with his wife and two children to the United States on furlough. In the autumn of the same year he was appointed by the House of Bishops to the Bishopric of Shanghai, but declined. He was again appointed in 1876, and after much doubt and hesitation finally accepted and was consecrated in Grace Church, New York, October 3, 1877. In the meantime he had employed himself in soliciting funds for founding a college in China, and upon his return in 1878 the property at Jessfield was bought and the corner stone of the first St. John's College laid on Easter Monday, 1879. St. Mary's Hall, a school for girls was also founded on the same piece of property.

In 1879 the Bishop translated the Prayer Book into Wên-li. About this time the station at Wuchang was left without a missionary and the Bishop moved with his family to Wuchang and undertook the work of that station and the building of a church in addition to his work of translation and the regular duties of the episcopate. Here in the summer of 1881 he was stricken with paralysis, which deprived him both of his speech and of the use of his limbs and compelled him to go to Europe for special treatment. His health became comparatively restored, but the loss of power in his limbs and the difficulty of speech still remained. Under the circumstances he felt that he must resign the episcopal office, which he did in the autumn of 1883.

In 1886 he returned to the United States with his family and began what was the most remarkable period of his career. He determined to continue his work of the translation of the Bible. He was unable to speak clearly enough to be understood by a Chinese scribe, even had such help been procurable, but he went to work by means of a typewriter, which he could only operate with one finger on account of his infirmity, to revise his translation of the Old Testament. Working as has ever been his custom eight hours a day he was able to finish this in a year. Then began the



greater work of making a complete translation of the Bible into easy Wên-li. The work occupied him seven years, and was necessarily done in romanised text, which was afterwards written out in China into Chinese character. The work was done from the original Hebrew and Greek, and was finally published in 1902 by the American Bible Society. In 1895 the Bishop came back to Shanghai to carry out his work of transferring the romanised text of his translation into the character, and lived there for about two years. He then moved to Japan, where the work was being printed, for greater convenience in proof-reading and correction of the text. Ever since he has gone on steadily with his work by the help of two scribes, the one a Chinese and the other a Japanese. The Wên-li translation published, he revised his mandarin translation and then undertook the preparation of a Reference Bible for the American Bible Society. Of late he has been engaged upon a translation of the Apocrypha, which his death left unfinished. Besides the work which the Bishop did in Chinese he had, while in Peking, partly finished a dictionary of the Mongolian language.

Bishop Schereschewsky was a scholar and a<sup>a</sup> born linguist, and he steadily perfected himself for the work of translation by the most exact and laborious study. Hebrew was his by his birth and the classical tongues by his later education, and on coming to China he went further in his researches into oriental languages, above all devoting himself to Chinese, in which he was a master. One may say that with him we have bid farewell to the old type of missionary scholar, the man who lived for and in the Chinese language and literature, men like Legge and Faber and Edkins, who gave themselves to this one pursuit, and to whom classical Chinese was an ideal.

The thing which lies on the very surface of this long life of Bishop Schereschewsky is its entire simplicity. He had literally one object, to make plain the Word of God to the Chinese. All his study and effort, the laborious acquisition of many tongues and of much learning was strictly devoted and consecrated to this end. For year after year he worked alone, in health and in sickness, crippled for the long space of twenty-five years in a way which would have kept back most men from any work at all, unknown to the world outside his study and the few friends who understood and appreciated the greatness of his purpose. Day by day, without rest or intermission, he toiled on, doing this one thing and doing it as well as he could. There is a deep sense of mission, of being set apart to do this task in such a life as he lived. He was a born translator. If his duties as Bishop were accepted because he felt that it was a duty that was laid upon him, still his work as translator of the Bible was foremost in his thought, and not even the weakened body could keep back the strong, clear, well-furnished mind from the work it had set itself. The lessons of faith, and patience, and a single clear aim in life are plain for us all.

He was a man also of large ideas. This was partly so because he lived in the scholar's atmosphere, in communion with the great in literature, but in the practical field also he showed this quality. The first work of his short episcopate was to found St. John's College and St. Mary's Hall, with clear foresight of the part which Christian education had to play in the regeneration of China. In intercourse with him you were always conscious of a certain wideness of view coupled with the fact of his intense concentration on the great work of his life, his Chinese Bible.

He always faced death with calmness and would often speak quietly of its approach, only expressing the wish that he might be spared to finish the task which he had set before him. In the providence of God this was granted to him. It was characteristic that when death came he met it seated in his chair, the chair in which he had worked so long, and met his end fearlessly and in the confidence of a certain faith....Chinese Recorder, November, 1906, pp.615-617



## The Death of Bishop Schereschewsky

When, on the morning of Monday, October 15th, a cablegram arrived at the Church Missions House announcing the death in Tokyo, Japan, of the Right Reverend Samuel I.J. Schereschewsky, D.D., we all felt that a great Christian scholar and hero had gone to his reward. Among the achievements of vital importance and the services of great value which have been rendered to the missionary cause during the Christian centuries, few have been greater than those of this quiet, humble-minded, great-hearted sufferer, who, through years of pain and infirmity has kept in view his great object and with splendid determination worked toward its achievement.

The story of his life is doubtless well known to our readers and scarcely needs to be repeated at length. Born in Poland, of Jewish parents, about seventy-five years ago, he became, through a study of the Old Testament, converted to Christianity. To escape persecution he came to this country where he studied for the ministry in the General Theological Seminary and went to the China mission, reaching Shanghai in December, 1859.

Immediately his wonderful ability in the mastery of languages showed itself. With marvellous facility he acquired Chinese and within two years began the series of translations which have placed him in the first rank of those who have made the Scriptures available for people of other tongues. Twice he translated the entire Bible - and a large portion of the Prayer Book - his last, the Wen-li translation, being finished only three years ago. In 1877 he was consecrated Bishop of China, but after four years, being stricken with a disease which brought on complete paralysis, he resigned his see and devoted himself to the work of translation.

Every student of missions knows how great was his success and how great were his difficulties. A helpless man who must be carried from his chair to a carriage whenever he left his house, and who had for a long time the use of only one finger of his hand, he nevertheless, with the aid of a typewriter, accomplished an amount of translation which has been the admiration of scholars. Much of the time he toiled alone, bending to his self-imposed task with the spirit of a hero, and in the end he had turned the Scriptures into a language which could reach nearly one-quarter of the population of the world. The foremost students, both among the Chinese and the missionaries resident in China, have expressed their admiration for the life and work of this our scholarly bishop.

One other achievement inseparably connected with Bishop Schereschewsky's name is the founding of St. John's College, now St. John's University, in Shanghai. This he began in 1879 with a dozen boys in an old Chinese house badly out of repair. Today St. John's is the best institution of its kind anywhere in Asia. Its 300 or more students come from every part of the empire. Every year it sends out a number of Christian young men whose work on behalf of their country as teachers, clergymen and physicians has done much and will do more for the redemption of China.

Through the long years of battle with pain and helplessness the bishop was cheered and sustained by the cooperation of Mrs. Schereschewsky. Without her constant aid his work must have been still more seriously handicapped, if not impossible. Besides giving her the assurance of its prayers, the Church will ever hold her in loving remembrance.

And so at the last, with his great work done and the travail and



sorrow all behind him, Samuel I.J. Schereschewsky, bishop, scholar, translator, hero, went home to his rest. For him the whole Church thanks God, and through the inspiration of his great example she takes new courage ...Spirit of Missions, 1906, p.937